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**OPPOSITION TO RB 227 – AAC THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF ATV'S AND
SNOWMOBILES**

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and Members of the Planning and Development Committee;

My name is Joe Rutigliano and I am an OHV enthusiast and a hard working, law abiding, tax paying resident of Connecticut.

It has recently come to my attention as a member of the New England Trail Riders Association (NETRA) that our elected representatives are considering increasing fines for ATV use in the state. Like many other OHV enthusiasts I am unable to attend public hearings such as this one because I have a full time job. However I wanted to take the opportunity to express heartfelt opposition on behalf of the thousands of friends and neighbors who enjoy this sport and have similar job related commitments. Especially in this economy it is understandably difficult to get our voices heard. It is our strong belief that without opening public land to the use and enjoyment of all members of the public equally, that additional restrictions and penalties should not be placed on the riding community. Instead of ever larger enforcement expenditures and increasingly onerous penalties the true solution can be found in responsibly sharing public land.

We ask that you consider the needs of the large, and growing group of Connecticut OHV enthusiasts and the many local businesses who would benefit from opening public land to responsible public use. Currently there are approximately 70,000 OHV's in the state of Connecticut who's riders are denied access to the large areas of public lands and open spaces which already have pre-existing trail systems. In NETRA you have a common voice and a partner to work with the DEP and municipalities to maintain and improve the land and trail systems once all of the public is given equal access. I believe we can work together to create a situation that is fair to all interested parties, the environment and beneficial to the the state. We have only to look to states such as New Hampshire to see the success this partnership can yield.

Finally I ask you to consider one last point regarding safety. Increasing the penalties on OHV enthusiasts who are denied equal access to public lands creates a potentially unsafe environment. Given no positive choices many riders will be incentivized to avoid draconian enforcement by fleeing authorities. In most cases they will be successful, rendering additional penalties useless. However it is my concern this perverse incentive system may some day result in unnecessary injury. I know a better solution is available and I urge you to make our states public land open to all of our residents equally.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my opposition to this bill and the potential solutions. I look forward to working together constructively in the future.

Sincerely,
Joe Rutigliano